

## **NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL**

**24 JULY 2024**

### **STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN OF SCRUTINY BOARD**

Scrutiny Board brings together the Chairs of the six thematic overview and scrutiny committees at the Council and the Older Peoples', Young People's and Climate Change Champions. It provides an opportunity for a whole council view of scrutiny activity, which avoids gaps and overlaps and helps establish a lead committee for areas of joint interest. It also provides a forum in which the key performance issues for the Council can be reviewed and items for further scrutiny identified.

The scrutiny function was created to act as a check on and balance to the executive and it is a statutory requirement for all authorities operating executive arrangements. There has been one meeting of Scrutiny Board since my last statement to Council.

The meeting of Scrutiny Board on 24 May 2024 focussed upon the scrutiny of the Executive Q4 Performance and Finance Management Report, ahead of the members of the Board attending the meeting of the Executive on Tuesday 28 May 2024. Some of the issues raised at the Executive meeting by members of the Scrutiny Board are highlighted below:

- The reduction in the number of applications to the North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund over the last quarter at a time when the cost-of-living crisis is still having an impact upon people's finances
- The declining numbers of smokers and what resources the Council needs to put into smoking cessation programmes through public health
- The importance of NHS health checks in terms of ill-health prevention and early intervention
- The increase in referrals to children's social care and re-referrals
- The number of Education Health Care Plans that are incomplete and subject to (successful) appeal when they go to Tribunal
- The increase in the number of children being home educated
- The reasons why children are suspended and excluded from school and what the role of the Council is in addressing this
- The alignment of the garden waste collection (brown bins) across the county since the creation of the new unitary council and whether this has led to a reduction in the level of composting
- The increase in reported fly-tipping and what is driving this
- Increases in the number of virtual visits to libraries and whether there is a need to move investment away from buildings and into IT infrastructure to support this growth.

Updates were also provided by the Climate Change Champion, the Older People's Champion and the Young People's Champion on key elements of their work over the past 3 months. The themes covered by the updates included:

- The annual reports of the Champions have been presented at the meetings of the relevant overview and scrutiny committees
- Ageing well and key issues such as falls prevention, exercise and the links to health and wellbeing, and employment opportunities for older and retired people
- Concerns have been raised by some representative groups for older people around the transition to a cashless society and also the digital switchover for landlines

- Support for corporate parenting and children who are looked after and key issues such as: engagement with a range of different services health and other services that can assist them; and the ongoing work of the Virtual School
- Climate change and a focus upon developing and embedding a suite of detailed measures of performance for progress against the carbon reduction targets.

Members of Scrutiny Board also reviewed a number of matters that directly related to the Council's scrutiny function, including:

- The allocation of work from the former Transition (LGR) Overview and Scrutiny Committee (non-housing and leisure) to other scrutiny committees, following the cessation of that committee and constitution of the Housing and Leisure Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the meeting of Council on 15 May 2024.
- The updated statutory guidance on local authority scrutiny published by the Department for Levelling up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) in April 2024. This new guidance refreshes that previously published in 2019. Whilst the guidance does not identify anything of immediate concern, it does serve as a useful baseline against which to undertake a high-level review or health check of the Council's scrutiny function.
- A review of Area Constituency Committee (ACC) work programmes and cross-over with overview and scrutiny. It is important that the ACCs and the overview and scrutiny committees link in with one another so that work is effectively co-ordinated and value added.
- Two motions that were referred to Scrutiny Board from Council on 15 May 2024: 1) care experience as a protected characteristic; and 2) public land for cultivation. A decision was made as to which overview and scrutiny committees were best suited to take these forward and then make recommendations to Council.

Members of Scrutiny Board are next due meet at 10am on Friday 16 August 2024. At that meeting, the Executive Q1 Performance and Finance Management Report will be scrutinised.

COUNCILLOR KARIN SEDGWICK  
16 July 2024